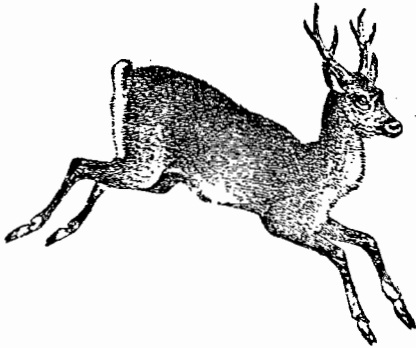


Return

E. J. Shumak
Sharon, Wisconsin

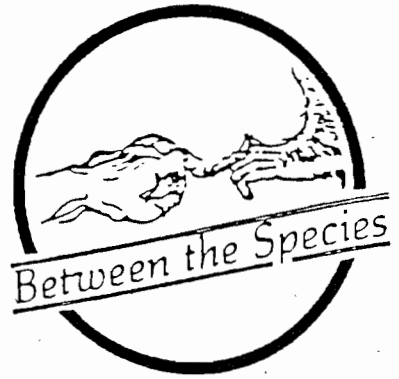


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I still walk these fields where my kind was once plentiful. The rabbit and deer still run in the north, much as they did when I was here. This land has changed much, yet remains the same in so many ways. There are still the unspoiled areas, though they are not as abundant as I remember them. Some even say they have seen my kind returning to these far northern sections, though I fear this is but wishful thinking.

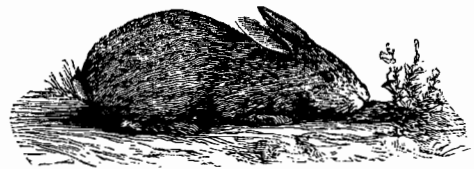
My brother the wolf has started a reestablishment here, perhaps bringing the natural balance and order back to a small section of our country. I remember watching from a hillside while my wolf brothers would wear down a deer that had escaped me. I marvelled at their ability to work as a team while I had difficulty even teaching my kits the ways of the hunt. Perhaps this is why my kind has yet to return while brother wolf is doing so well.

I am saddened walking this land in spirit only. I remember running the hillsides and the feel of the grasses ripping under my feet as my claws reached out for purchase on the steep paths. I see there are those that would work towards the recovery of the land here, yet they are stymied by a lack of understanding in many of this country's leaders. The successes of this small



percentage of caring people is no less miraculous, when viewed against the enormous task set before them. Many of you understand the need, yet seem not to understand the immediacy of the problem. If my sisters are ever to return, and if those creatures that have fought so hard to remain are to continue to do so, then you must begin to change now. This country cannot become the refuge it should, without continuous vigilance and effort.

The Indians of this area referred to me as "the ghost walker," and as my spirit returns to this land I recall the respect and honor that was paid me by these original residents. I am known by different names, five in your language. I am cougar, catamount, puma, panther and mountain lion. I wish to return to this land and be known by any of these titles, save the Indian one. I am now truly a ghost walker; please help me to return in flesh, not merely in spirit.



FICTION